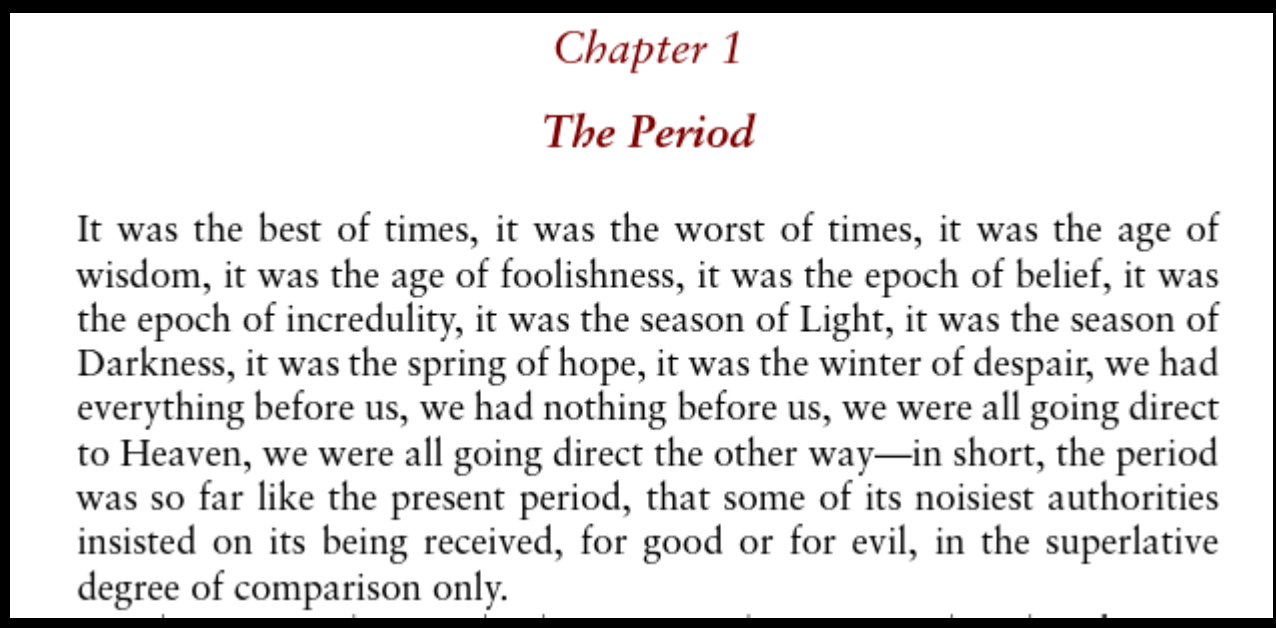
Introduction To The Hebdomian Way

Lapis Philosophicus And The Millennial Perspective

There arrives a moment in the lives of some individuals who from personal practical experience, or from a hermetic quest (ἄνοδος) for Lapis Philosophicus {1} such as the modern Hebdomian Way, {2} know if only intuitively the flaws that are part of our human nature and which flaws are evident in the impersonal wars, the armed conflicts, which have bedevilled us for millennia and resulted in so many deaths, so much destruction and so much human suffering. This is the moment of a personal choice: to be or to remain distant from such matters or to actively try in some way to act.

A moment well-described over a century ago by the novelist Charles Dickens:



Chapter 1

The Period

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

Many individuals, in many lands, over many millennia have lived their own answer of seeking to 'hold the line' as Myatt explains in two essays based on this own personal experience. {3} In a hermetic quest, the choice is well-described in an ancient text, tractate XIII, that formed part of the Corpus Hermeticum involving as it does a 'separation from the world',

1. Ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας περὶ θειότητος διαλεγόμενος· οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψας, φάμενος μηδένα δύνασθαι σωθῆναι πρὸ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας· ἐμοῦ τε σοῦ ἱκέτου γενομένου, ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄρους καταβάσεως, μετὰ τὸ σὲ ἐμοὶ διαλεχθῆναι, πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅτι τοῦ τον παρὰ πάντα μόνον ἀγνοῶ, καὶ ἔφης, ὅταν μέλλῃς κόσμου ἀπαλλοτριοῦσθαι, παραδιδόναι μοι. τοιμος ἐγενόμην καὶ ἀπηνδρείωσα τὸ ἐν ἐμοὶ φρόνημα ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ἀπάτης· σὺ δέ μου καὶ τὰ ὑστερήματα ἀναπλήρωσον οἷς ἔφης μοι παλιγγενεσίας <γένεσιν> παραδοῦναι προθέ μενος ἐκ φωνῆς ἢ κρυβήν· ἀγνοῶ, ὦ Τρισμέγιστε, ἐξ οἵας μήτρας ἄνθρωπος ἐγεννήθη, σπορᾶς δὲ ποίας.

2. Ὦ τέκνον, σοφία νοερὰ ἐν σιγῇ καὶ ἡ σπορὰ τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἀγαθόν.

1. When, father, you in the Exoterica conversed about divinity your language was enigmatic and obscure.

There was, from you, no disclosure; instead, you said no one can be rescued before the Palingenesis. Now, following our discussion as we were passing over the mountain I became your supplicant, inquiring into learning the discourse on Palingenesis since that, out of all of them, is the only one unknown to me, with you saying it would be imparted to me when I became separated from the world.

> Thus I prepared myself, distancing my ethos from the treachery in the world. Therefore - by explaining it either aloud or in secret - rectify my insufficiencies since you said you would impart Palingenesis to me.
>
> Trismegistus, I am unknowing of what source a mortal is begotten and from what sown.
>
> 2. My son, noetic sapientia is in silence, with the sowing the genuinely noble. {4}

The Hermetic Quest

In the Ποιμάνδρης (Poemandres) tractate of the Corpus Hermeticum, written between c.100 and c.230 ev, the personal quest is described as a journey through seven spheres during which the initiate 'offers up' - transcends - certain personal traits:

> καὶ οὕτως ὁρμᾷ λοιπὸν ἄνω διὰ τῆς ἁρμονίας, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ζώνῃ δίδωσι τὴν αὐξητικὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὴν μειωτικήν, καὶ τῇ δευτέρᾳ τὴν μηχανὴν τῶν κακῶν, δόλον ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμητικὴν ἀπάτην ἀνενέργητον, καὶ τῇ τετάρτῃ τὴν ἀρχοντικὴν προφανίαν ἀπλεονέκτητον, καὶ τῇ πέμπτῃ τὸ θράσος τὸ ἀνόσιον καὶ τῆς τόλμης τὴν προπέτειαν, καὶ τῇ ἕκτῃ τὰς ἁφορμὰς τὰς κακὰς τοῦ πλούτου ἀνενεργήτους, καὶ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ ζώνῃ τὸ ἐνεδρεῦον ψεῦδος.
>
> "Thus does the mortal hasten through the harmonious structure, offering up, in the first realm, that vigour which grows and which fades, and - in the second one - those dishonourable machinations, no longer functioning. In the third, that eagerness which deceives, no longer functioning; in the fourth, the arrogance of command, no longer insatiable; in the fifth, profane insolence and reckless haste; in the sixth, the bad inclinations occasioned by riches, no longer functioning; and in the seventh realm, the lies that lie in wait." {5}

In the Hebdomian Way, these qualities are enumerated in terms of the seven stages, or degrees, of initiation:

- ° 1. That vigour - enthusiasm - which grows and which fades.
- ° 2. Those dishonourable machinations.
- ° 3. That eagerness which deceives.
- ° 4. The arrogance of authority over others.
- ° 5. Profane insolence and reckless haste.
- ° 6. The bad inclinations occasioned by a comfortable life-style.
- ° 7. The lies that lie in wait. {2}

Thus, the modern quest simply involves seven practical tasks, outlined in Appendix One, which experience has shown to be effective in transcending those seven personal traits and which tasks enable an individual to discover the inner insight, the wisdom, that is and was described by the term Lapis Philosophicus.

Thus, the quest reveals a millennial perspective; the knowledge of metamorphosis which is the axiom that all supra-personal ideated constructs manufactured or described by humans are supra-personal and causal in nature, and therefore are not only subject to change, to metamorphosis over causal time, but have a limited life-span, just as the living organisms of Nature, presenced on Earth, have a limited span of life.

Such supra-personal human manufactured constructs include States, nations, cultures, and Empires; and also ideas, ideals, legends, myths, and ideologies, and even religions, all of which, over periods of causal time, are subject to revisions, meliorations, varying interpretations, schisms, reformations and counter-reformations.

Philosophically, this esoteric knowledge is, as Aristotle explained, of ἀρχὴ and of 'change' apprehend by us as physis, φύσις:

> ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσά πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.
>
> Given the foregoing, then principally – and to be exact – physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is. {6}

The hermetic quest is therefore to attain an internal balance, between our mortal being and Being itself, since as described in the Renaissance text *Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis*,

> quod inferiora superioribus et superiora inferioribus respondent. {7}
>
> For the higher is as the lower with the lower as the higher.

Being was described in several ways in the Corpus Hermeticum, including as both male-and-female (ἀρρενόθηλυς) in the Poemandres tractate, as the Monas (μονάς) and The Theos (ὁ θεός) in tractate IV, and in tractate XI as the genesis:

> ἵνα πάντα γίνηται τὰ γινόμενα ἢ τὰ ἅπαξ γεγονότα ἢ τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο, ὦ φίλτατε, ζωή· τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ καλόν, τοῦτο δέ ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθόν, τοῦτό ἐστιν ὁ θεός.
>
> of everything brought-into-being; what is coming-into-being, what has come-into-being, and what will come-into-being. This, my friend, is Life; this is the beautiful, this is the noble; this is the theos. {8}

Thus, many of the texts of the Corpus Hermeticum, which formed the basis for hermeticism ancient and modern, had a more nuanced view of Being than the monolithic one presented by modern translations such as those by Mead, Copenhaver et al, where Being, the genesis of beings, is simply described as God, or as 'the father' familiar from the Christian religion.

Being itself has been variously understood in a non-Christian way, through for example traditional metaphysics, through the ontology of Martin Heidegger, and as the numinous/The Numen in Myatt's pagan philosophy of pathei-mathos. {9}

The Monas And The Millennial Perspective

The beginning of tractate IV is interesting:

> Ἐπειδὴ τὸν πάντα κόσμον ἐποίησεν ὁ δημιουργός, οὐ χερσὶν ἀλλὰ λόγωι, ὥστε οὕτως

> ὑπολάμβανε ὡς τοῦ παρόντος καὶ ἀεὶ ὄντος καὶ πάντα ποιήσαντος καὶ ἑνὸς μόνου, τῇι δὲ αὐτοῦ θελήσει δημιουργήσαντος τὰ ὄντα
>
> Because the artisan crafted the complete cosmic order not by hand but through Logos
> You should understand that Being as presential, as eternal, as having crafted all being, As
> One only, who by thelesis formed all that is. {10}

As is the following in v.11 which arguably hints at a millennial perspective

> πᾶν δὲ τὸ γεννώμενον ἀτελὲς καὶ διαιρετόν, καὶ αὐξητὸν καὶ μειωτόν, τῶι δὲ τελείωι οὐδὲν τούτων γίνεται. καὶ τὸ μὲν αὐξητὸν αὐξάνεται ἀπὸ τῆς μονάδος, ἁλίσκεται δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀσθενείας, μηκέτι δυνάμενον τὴν μονάδα χωρῆσαι
>
> Everything that is begotten is unfinished, partible,
> Liable to decline, resurgence
> Which do not befall what is complete
> For what is resurgent is resurgence from Monas
> But what is brought low is so by its own malady
> Because unable to hold Monas.

Conclusion

Modern hermeticism, as manifest for example in the Hebdomian Way, provides an individual alternative to the conflicts, internal and external, of our societies. A chance to perceive and understand our world without ideas, ideals, legends, myths, ideologies, and religion. An evolution beyond causal constructs such as States, nations, 'patriotic' cultures, hegemonies, and that supra-personal inclusion-exclusion which was and still is the genesis of so much turmoil, destruction, and deaths.

Selann Ibotæ, et allæ
October 2024
(Revised September 2025)

°°°

{1} As a term Lapis Philosophicus means the "jewel of the alchemist", since the term Philosophicus means an alchemist and not, as is commonly said, a philosopher, just as lapis (qv. λίθος τῶν σοφῶν) when used in Latin alchemical texts means "jewel" and not "stone". For Hermetic tradition relates that λίθος as a jewel, or precious stone, was attested by Herodotus, who in The Histories, Book II, 44, wrote, in reference to "the sacred Temple of Heracles", ἢ δὲ σμαράγδου λίθου λάμποντος τὰς νύκτας μέγαθος.

It was possibly used in the same way by Aristotle who wrote, in reference to the Nine Archons, ἀναγράψαντες δὲ τοὺς νόμους εἰς τοὺς κύρβεις ἔστησαν ἐν τῇ στοᾷ τῇ βασιλείῳ καὶ ὤμοσαν χρήσεσθαι πάντες. οἱ δ᾽ ἐννέα ἄρχοντες ὀμνύντες πρὸς τῷ λίθῳ κατεφάτιζον ἀναθήσειν ἀνδριάντα χρυσοῦν, ἐάν τινα παραβῶσι τῶν νόμων: ὅθεν ἔτι καὶ νῦν οὕτως ὀμνύουσι. Athenian Constitution, 7.1

Also, as noted in *English–Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* by S. C. Woodhouse, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1910, the term λίθος describes a jewel, as in Plato: ὧν καὶ τὰ ἐνθάδε λιθίδια εἶναι ταῦτα τὰ ἀγαπώμενα μόρια, σάρδιά τε καὶ ἰάσπιδας καὶ σμαράγδους καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα: ἐκεῖ δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐ τοιοῦτον εἶναι καὶ ἔτι τούτων καλλίω. Phaedo 110 δ-ε

{2} https://sevenoxonians.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/hebdomian-way.pdf

{3} (i) https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/holding-the-line.pdf (ii) https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/dm-sequel-holding-the-line.pdf

{4} The translation is by Myatt who explains his use of terms such as 'noetic sapientia' and 'Palingenesis' in his extensive commentary: https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

{5} https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf

{6} Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α, Translated by Myatt. The translation and commentary are included here as Appendix Two.

{7} The Latin text is from *Secretum Secretorum Cum Glossis Et Notulis: Tractatus Brevis Et Utilis Ad Declarandum Quedam Obscure Dicta Fratris Rogeri*, published in 1920.

{8} Which translation by Myatt - https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/eight-tractates-v2-print.pdf - brings to mind the Greek term καλὸς κἀγαθός of which he wrote in his monograph *Classical Paganism And The Christian Ethos*,

> "we are, ontologically, emanations of and presence Being, and are a connexion to the cosmos - to other presencings of Being - through, in terms of epistemology, not only reason (λόγος), perceiverance (νοῦς) and wordless-awareness (συμπάθεια, empathy) but also through τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τὸ καλὸν, and ἀρετὴ, through the beautiful and the well-balanced, the valourous and honourable, and those who possess arête, all of which are combined in one Greek phrase: καλὸς κἀγαθός, which means those who conduct themselves in a gentlemanly or lady-like manner and who thus manifest - because of their innate physis or through pathei-mathos or through a certain type of education or learning - nobility of character. Which Greek phrase expresses the ethics, the high personal standards, of the ancient paganus weltanschauung we have been discussing." https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/belief-and-reason-v7b.pdf

{9} https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf

(10} As Myatt controversially notes in his commentary:

> *artisan*. δημιουργόν. See Poemandres 9. The theme of an artisan-creator, and their artisements, is common to the third tractate (Ιερός Λόγος) as well. That the tractate begins by using the term artisan, rather than theos, is perhaps significant.
>
> *that Being*. The conventional and grammatical interpretation is "you should understand him as..." although how such a human-type gender could be adduced from or manifest by how the 'body' of the artisan-creator is described in subsequent verses is an interesting and relevant metaphysical question. Can, or should, a 'body' that cannot be touched, that cannot be seen, that cannot be measured, that is not separable - οὐδὲ διαστατόν - and thus which is not conventionally 'human', be described as male? It is to suggest such metaphysical questions (and the limitations of ordinary language in describing and answering such metaphysical questions) that I have here departed from convention and used 'that Being' instead of 'him'.

The term 'Being' also has the advantage that it avoids the gender bias implicit in translating θεὸς as 'god' given that 'god/God' implies a male entity [...]

*presentia*l. πάρειμι. Presential - from the classical Latin praesentia - means "having or implying actual presence", as manifesting (as being presenced) in a locality or with an individual, and is thus more apposite here than the rather bland word 'present'. Cf. the use of 'presenced' in Ιερός Λόγος 2, et sequentia.

One only. ἑνὸς μόνου. A formulaic mystic phrase, implying uniqueness. Cf. ordinary usage in Plato, Crito 47, ἢ ἑνὸς μόνου ἐκείνου [...] ἑνὸς μόνου.

thelesis. θέλησις. Given what follows - τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σῶμα ἐκείνου, οὐχ ἁπτόν, οὐδὲ ὁρατόν, οὐδὲ μετρητόν, οὐδὲ διαστατόν - a transliteration to suggest something other than a human type 'will' or 'desire'; such as 'disposition'. That is, Being (whatsoever of whomsoever Being is, in terms of gender and otherwise) is predisposed to craft - to presence - being as beings: as immortals (deities), as mortals (humans) and otherwise, qv. Ιερός Λόγος, Poemandres 8 ff, and Poemandres 31: οὗ ἡ βουλὴ τελεῖται ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων δυνάμεων (whose purpose is accomplished by his own arts).

Editorial Note: In regard to θέλησις, unlike other sources LSJ (Liddell, Scott, Jones: Ancient Greek Lexicon) provides three obscure, non-Christian, non-Hebraic sources for the word:

° Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta, Ed. H. von Arnim, Leipzig 1903

° Phlegon Trallianus Paradoxographus, ii A.D. Ed. O. Keller, Rerum naturalium scrip<*>ores Graeci minores, vol. i, Leipzig (T.) 1877

° Epistula, v Pythagorae et Pythagoreorum Epistulae.

Hence, further research is required regarding the non-Christian use of the term.

ooo o ooo

Appendix One

The Seven Tasks of The Hebdomian Way

1.

Obtain copies of and read tractates I, III, IV, and XIII of The Corpus Hermeticum. The book containing the tractates should have a scholarly commentary and if a translation is required at least two different versions should be obtained, read and compared. {1} Afterwards, write an essay concerning your understanding of Hellenic Hermeticism. If an individual unversed in the classics has a desire to do so they can learn Hellenistic Greek and undertake their own translations. In understanding hermeticism the individual may find the study and use of the noetic Star Game helpful. {2}

2.

For men, (a) walking thirty-two miles, in rural terrain, in less than seven hours while carrying a rucksack weighing at least 30 pounds; (b) running 26 miles and 385 yards (a Marathon) in four and a half hours; (c) cycling two hundred or more miles in twelve hours.

For women, (a) walking twenty-seven miles in under seven hours while carrying a rucksack weighing

at least 15 pounds; (b) running 26 miles and 385 yards (a Marathon) in five hours; (c) cycling one hundred and seventy miles in twelve hours.

Those who, before beginning their quest have already reached such standards should set themselves greater physical challenges and achieve them.

3.

With an existing partner, or after finding a suitable partner willing to undertake the task with you, find a hill or mountain in an isolated area - or a desert area miles from any human habitation - which affords an unobstructed night-time view of the stars and wild-camp there for at least three days and nights.

4.

A living alone in an wilderness area, near water suitable for drinking, for a three month period taking with you all that is required in a rucksack which you carry on your own back. You can either (i) build your own shelter from local materials and find your own food by hunting, fishing, and gathering, or (ii) take a tent and sleeping bag and on a monthly basis purchase and take back to your site such food supplies as may be needed from a locality situated at a suitable walking distance, with around 10 miles being suggested.

During the task you should maintain your isolation and have no means of communication with the outside world, use only candles (in a lantern) for illumination, have no means of measuring the passing of time (such as a watch) and no means of reproducing music or any other form of entertainment.

The Hebdomadary should keep a handwritten journal to record their musings.

5.

Write a full length novel of whatever genre, two of whose characters should be based on or inspired by either contemporary or historical persons you find interesting or inspiring or have an empathy for or a dislike of. The novel can also be based on your own life and/or experience and involve a locality and/or persons you know.

You should undertake the necessary contemporary or historical research in terms of plausible characters, scenarios, dialogue and locations, and if necessary read several published contemporary or historical novels to ascertain for yourself how various novelists structure their story, describe characters and events, and employ dialogue.

6.

The task begins at a full moon in Autumn and lasts seven days and nights and is to stay alone for that period in an isolated underground cavern where or near to where drinkable water flows, taking all that is required for the duration of the rite, including water if there is no drinkable water available, and food consisting of bread and cheese and, if you so desire, a supply of wine or beer. If a such an underground cavern cannot be found, then a suitable alternative is an isolated dark cave with, if necessary, its entrance suitably screened to avoid an ingress of light.

The only light is from candles (housed in a lantern) and no means of communication with the outside world, no timepiece, mechanical or otherwise, and no modern means of reproducing music nor any

other means of personal entertainment should be brought.

The Hebdomadary should arrange for a trusted person or their partner or a family member to end their isolation after seven days.

7.

The task involves the Hebdomadary - alone or with their partner - walking, in isolated terrain, a distance of at least 210 miles in 21 days carrying appropriate equipment for camping and supplies of food and water to last several days with their route enabling them to find suitable sources of drinking water when necessary. Supplies of food, if dehydrated or freeze-dried, should last as long as practicable, and then when necessary and possible food can be bought en route.

The journey is to end at or near a site which the Hebdomadary finds they have an empathy with or if accompanied by their partner that they both have an empathy with. The Hebdomadary and/or their partner should keep a handwritten diary of their journey.

°°°

{1} Recommended translations with commentaries: (i) Copenhaver, Hermetica, 1995, Cambridge University Press, ISBN 978-0521425438 (ii) Myatt, *Corpus Hermeticum, Eight Tractates*, 2017, ISBN 978-1976452369

{2} The noetic Star Game is descried in *The Star Game And The Hebdomad*, https://sevenoxonians.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/hebdomad-star-game-v3.pdf

°°° ° °°°

Appendix Two

Some Notes on Aristotle, Metaphysics, Book 5, 1015α

Text

ἐκ δὴ τῶν εἰρημένων ἡ πρώτη φύσις καὶ κυρίως λεγομένη ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία ἡ τῶν ἐχόντων ἀρχὴν κινήσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ᾗ αὐτά: ἡ γὰρ ὕλη τῷ ταύτης δεκτικὴ εἶναι λέγεται φύσις, καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις. καὶ ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως τῶν φύσει ὄντων αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐνυπάρχουσά πως ἢ δυνάμει ἢ ἐντελεχείᾳ.

Translation

Given the foregoing, then principally – and to be exact – physis denotes the quidditas of beings having changement inherent within them; for substantia has been denoted by physis because it embodies this, as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. For physis is inherent changement either manifesting the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is.

Commentary And Notes

physis. φύσις. A transliteration, since (i) this is a fundamental philosophical principle/term that requires contextual interpretation, and (ii) the English words 'nature' and Nature not only do not adequately describe this principle but also lead to and have led to certain misunderstandings of Aristotle in particular and of classical Greek culture in general.

quidditas. οὐσία. Quidditas – post-classical Latin, from whence the English word 'quiddity' – is more appropriate here than 'essence', given the metaphysical (ontological) context and given that 'essence' now has so many non-philosophical connotations. An interesting alternative would be the scholastic term haeceitty. As with physis, quidditas is a philosophical term which requires contextual interpretation.

changement inherent. The expression ἀρχὴν κινήσεως is crucial to understanding what Aristotle means in respect of physis. In regard to κίνησις, since Aristotle here does not mean 'motion' or 'movement' in the sense of Newtonian physics (with its causal concepts of force, mass, velocity, kinetic energy), and since such physical movement is what the English words 'motion' and 'movement' now most usually denote, then alternatives must be found. Hence the translation 'changement'.

For what Aristotle is describing here is 'change', as for example in the natural development, the unfolding, the growth, of some-thing living that occurs because it is living; because it is possessed of Life and which Life is the ἀρχή of the changement, the 'original being' (the φύσις) from whence being-becomes to be often perceived and classified by us in orderly ways.

What is described is an a-causal change, of being-becoming – of being unfolding – and thus fulfilling the potentiality of being within it. Hence why here Aristotle writes ἀρχὴν κινήσεως, which describes the potential changement inherent in certain beings. 1 That is, the a-causal origin of beings-becoming, or having become, and which beings (having changed, developed, unfolded) we then perceive and classify in orderly ways 2, such as by shape or usefulness to us, or by a notion such as causality: in terms of physical- 'movement'. Which is why, in Aristotle, there is a relation between φύσις, μορφή, and εἶδος – εἶδος in the sense of 'perceiveration' and not, as in Plato, denoting an abstract 'form' or an 'ideal' – διὸ καὶ ὅσα φύσει ἔστιν ἢ γίγνεται, ἤδη ὑπάρχοντος ἐξ οὗ πέφυκε γίγνεσθαι ἢ εἶναι, οὕπω φαμὲν τὴν φύσιν ἔχειν ἐὰν μὴ ἔχῃ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν μορφήν.

Thus φύσις is what is a-causal in beings and which acausality is the origin of the 'natural' order that unfolds because of the potentiality of being to become, to presence in the causal, whence to be perceived by us in various orderly arrangements and/or arranged in terms of usefulness, and which arrangements/usefulness include τὸ καλόν – and thus schemata, τάξις 3 – and ἀρετή.

substantia. ὕλη. I have chosen to use the etymon of the English word 'substance' – qv. substantia in Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Metaphysicae* – to again (i) emphasize the need for contextual interpretation in respect of a specific philosophical term, and (ii) to avoid whatever misunderstandings may arise from the modern (non-ontological) connotations of words such as 'matter' and 'substance'.

as have the becoming that is a coming-into-being, and a burgeoning, because they are changements predicated on it. καὶ αἱ γενέσεις καὶ τὸ φύεσθαι τῷ ἀπὸ ταύτης εἶναι κινήσεις.

The sense of γένεσις here implies a 'coming-into-being' rather than just 'generation', just as φύω implies a being 'burgeoning' – unfolding, revealing itself (its physis) – rather than just 'growing'.

the potentiality of a being or as what a being, complete of itself, is. The Greek word ἐντελεχείᾳ is compounded from ἐν ελει ἔχει and the sense here – in relation to ἐνυπάρχουσά – seems to be twofold: of a being as an unchanged being, and of what a being has become (or is becoming) as a result of a change, for both types of being actually exist, are real. One exists as a being as it is and has remained, and one exists as the being it has become (or is in the process of becoming) through the potential for changement inherent within it. Thus, for Aristotle, physis denotes the being of both types of being.

David Myatt
March 2015

[1] In respect of ἀρχὴ as implying what is primarily inherent, qv. 1012b-1013a.

[2] As Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Sciendum est autem, quod principium et causa licet sint idem subiecto, differunt tamen ratione. Nam hoc nomen principium ordinem quemdam importat; hoc vero nomen causa, importat influxum quemdam ad esse causati." Sententia libri Metaphysicae, liber 5, lectio 1, n 3.

[3] Regarding 1078a, τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἴδη τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὡρισμένον (the most noticeable expressions of kalos are schemata and harmony and consonancy), my view – given the context – is that τάξις here is best translated as "schemata", rather than "order" or "arrangement" both of which are vague, open to mis-interpretation, and unrelated to the context, which context is mathematical beauty. Similarly, ὁρίζω (to me) suggests consonancy, echoing as that (now somewhat obscure) English word does both by its use by, among others, Shakespeare (Hamlet, Act 2, Scene 2, 286) and also by its relation to the almost 'mathematical beauty' of some music (as evident for example in the counterpoint of JS Bach).

Furthermore, just because the Greek has συμμετρία it does not necessarily follow that the English word 'symmetry' is an appropriate translation, considering how the word symmetry is now used and has been used, in the West for many centuries, and especially in relation to art (in terms, for example, of objects and the human body).

Given that Aristotle in 1078a is referring to geometry in particular and mathematics in general, then an appropriate translation is 'harmony' – as in "a collation of representative signs or marks, so arranged that they exhibit their agreement and account for their discrepancies or errors." A harmony, in other words, that is most evident (as I mentioned in my essay) in Euclid's Elements, as schemata and consonancy are therein evident, most of the contents (theorems) of which book – deriving from people such as Pythagoras – were known to Aristotle.

Thus, a translation such as "the chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness" can in my opinion lead to projecting onto Aristotle what he may not necessarily have meant; and projecting onto in respect of how we now, over two thousand years after Aristotle, understand and use such common English terms. Hence, also, why I sometimes use obscure English words (which may suggest a relevant meaning) or transliterations (as in physis).

°°°

Source:
https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/aristotle-metaphysics-1015%ce%b1/

---

cc. Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-ND 4.0) License

---